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By Katherine Tully-McManus, CQ

It's getaway day for most lawmakers, but we're still waiting on that conference report. Here's your CQ Morning Briefing for Thursday, Dec. 14.

TOPLINES

1. **'CRomnibus' arrives.** House Republicans hope to fund the Pentagon through fiscal 2018 and extend non-defense appropriations at current levels through Jan. 19.
2. **Monumental change.** The president has moved to shrink some national monuments, and a House panel is looking to codify some of the changes.
3. **Tax accord.** Republicans have reached agreement on the parameters of their tax overhaul, but there's no text and no Joint Committee on Taxation score yet.

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Where Do We Go From Here? Seeking Answers to End America's Opioid Crisis

The opioid epidemic, like other epidemics before it, does not lend itself to simple solutions. As pharmaceutical distributors, it is our job as logistics experts to make sure that licensed healthcare professionals are supplied with the medications they need for the patients they serve. While our members do not manufacture, promote, prescribe or dispense opioids, we do recognize that it will require a commitment from every entity in the supply chain to end this public health emergency.

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SCHEMES

House: Convenes at 9 a.m. for consideration of a bill (HR 2396) on financial services companies' privacy policy notifications.

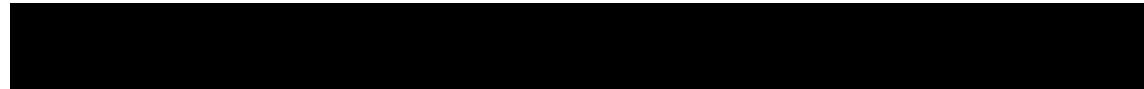
Senate: Convenes at 10 a.m. to continue consideration of the nomination of James Ho to be a U.S. circuit judge for the 5th Circuit.

Committees: Senate Armed Services holds a hearing on U.S. policy and strategy in the Middle East (*10 a.m., G-50 Dirksen*). Senate Judiciary holds a hearing on a bill (S 2152) to change the process for seeking restitution from defendants in child pornography cases and would require appointment of a guardian to act on behalf of the victim in court (*10 a.m., 226 Dirksen*). Check CQ Schedules for complete listings of committee meetings.

FULL BRIEFING

1. House GOP Introduces Jan. 19 Stopgap, Full-Year Defense Bill

House Appropriations Committee Republicans on Wednesday night released a proposal that would fund the Pentagon for all of fiscal 2018 alongside a continuing resolution that would extend non-defense appropriations at current levels through Jan. 19. The resolution (H J Res 124) also contains a fix for the Children's Health Insurance Program, ensuring the availability of funds next year.



It does not include emergency aid for hurricane- and wildfire-ravaged states and territories; some Republicans warn that could cost votes when the "CRomnibus" measure reaches the floor, likely early next week. Jennifer Shutt reports on details of the proposal and what's next.

2. Utah National Monuments Up for Debate

Lawsuits are already underway against the Trump administration's move to greatly shrink the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, but some House lawmakers are taking steps to codify the change into law.

Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument (Bureau of Land Management)

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands takes up a bill (HR 4558) that would divide the 1.9 million-acre Grand Staircase-Escalante monument into three distinct monuments -- Grand Staircase, Escalante Canyons and Kaiparowits -- totaling 1 million acres (*9:30 a.m., 1334 Longworth*). The move could open the areas to potential commercial and resource development. Elvina Nawaguna has a preview of the hearing.

Sponsored by Rep. Chris Stewart, R-Utah, the measure would also create Utah's sixth national park, Escalante Canyons. It would transfer a historic pioneer trial to the state of Utah and create a management council to draft and oversee a management plan for the new designations.

3. Republicans Strike Deal on Tax Overhaul (But It's Not Done Yet)

Republican tax writers from both chambers reached an agreement on the broad framework of the tax plan, but it's far from a done deal. Ryan McCrimmon has a status report on the tax overhaul.

Sen. Orrin G. Hatch and Rep. Kevin Brady (Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call)

The full conference agreement is expected to be released by the end of this week. Republicans still need to draft and finalize the legislative text and work with the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation to score the final version of the bill (HR 1). Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn, R-Texas, said the package might be ready for Senate floor debate as early as Monday.

Republicans have been racing to pass a final tax plan by Christmas, hoping to enact the first tax code rewrite since 1986 and notch their first policy achievement before the end of President Donald Trump's first year in the White House. Now they have a more pressing reason to make haste: finishing the tax code overhaul before their Senate majority shrinks from 52 to 51 seats when Democratic Sen.-elect Doug Jones of Alabama is sworn in, likely in the new year.

THE BIG STORY PODCAST

Alabama, Tangled Up in Blue -- Politics reporter Bridget Bowman, who was on the ground in Alabama, discusses how Democrat Doug Jones' win is reverberating in the political sphere and how it could affect Congress next year as lawmakers prepare for the 2018 midterm elections.

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Dec. 14, 2017 – 5:02 a.m.

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